

MR. MILLER: Good afternoon. My name is Jim Miller, and I'm the General Manager of West Elk Mine in Somerset, Colorado. West Elk employs more than 200 hardworking men and women; and unfortunately the only operating coal mine in the North Fork Valley. I speak to you not only as an employee of the coal industry, but a member of a community that benefits greatly from the production of coal. With nearly 30 percent of the world's coal reserves, America is the envy of the energy-hungry nations around the world. And the vast majority of these reserves are located on public lands here in the West. America has made excellent use of these reserves in recent decades, generating billions of dollars in revenues for Federal and State agencies, providing livelihoods for thousands of families, and delivering affordable, reliable fuel to power the U.S. economy. I would encourage you to continue with the Mineral Leasing Act that is subtitled as an act to promote the mining of coal and requires the Department to achieve the maximum economic recovery of coal on Federal lands. Today it is important that we acknowledge that these additional hearings have been precipitated by a small but vocal group with very clear interest. And while today they might wave a reform coal or transition coal flag instead of keep it in the ground flag, we all know their true intention is to ensure that public coal, and in fact all coal, is left in the ground. Frankly, they don't care whether they achieve that goal through a moratorium on the future leasing of Federal coal or a hike in the royalty rate that renders Federal coal uncompetitive in the future or some kind of carbon fee. But, let's face it. Eliminating production of coal on Federal land would equate to a zero percent return to the taxpayer -- not a higher return. There are few industries that provide a substantial return on public assets. And I have to believe the vast majority of Americans would view the existing return and the associated benefits of low-cost energy as a far better outcome than zero. Simply put, an increase in the royalty rate will only further create uncertainty and put additional pressure on communities through increased electricity rate and decreased government revenue for critical State programs. So, if the Department believes that the changes to the Federal Coal Program must be made, let's protect the many benefit generated from this valuable resource

and make coal mined on public lands more competitive, not less. Thank you.